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BURRELLE'S

# Both topless and bottomless, no less

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MADRID—A naked, muscular man, tanned nicely but for a rosy area where a bathing suit might have gone, was doing military-perfect push-ups. No one paid any attention on the crowded lawn.

In the past, it was necessary to get out to the coast, along semideserted inlets far from the staid capital, to do this sort of thing. Even bare breasts, an ordinary sight among European sunbathers, were taboo in this city four years ago.

Madrid's city hall, however, is known these days as a promoter of things modern—giving the people what the people want. And this summer, along with the usual city-sponsored celebrations and concerts, what they apparently wanted was a place to sunbathe in the nude.

Welcome to the Elipa solarium, Spain's first municipal nudist facility, set within the city's most popular pool and sports complex.

"We are pioneers. Madrid is always in the vanguard," said Gerardo Mediavilla, spokesman for the city's sports department, which oversees the nudist policy.

Were it not for "a certain reticence in our society," Mediavilla said, nude sunbathing would have made a more public debut—with bathing suit requirements at the pools simply lifted.

But memories of the outcry four years ago when women were first allowed to go topless at city pools prompted a more discreet plan.

On a hill overlooking the swarming and splashing of the complex's three pools, an occasional soul mounts steep earthen steps and disappears into a thatch-walled rectangle.

Two nervous teenage couples reach the entrance, where a notice lets them know emphatically that the spot is reserved for those in "a state of complete nudity." They turn around.

On a new lawn scattered with freshly planted saplings, four middle-age men are sitting around, chatting. "I've been practicing nudism at the beaches for 10 years," said an executive in tortoise-shell shades.

"This is nothing new for Spain," said another from under a light-blue golf cap. He conceded that not everyone was ready for this—including his wife and children, who were down at the pool.

Suddenly, heads turned as a band of the young and curious made its noisy way a few steps into the solarium and then suddenly froze.

A couple who appeared to be around 30 got up and, reached them. There is no shame, no scandal, so please be quiet and sit down, the husband, a schoolteacher, told them.

## Assignment: Spain

In the broiling Sunday sun, the sunbathers returned to their books and tanning, except for the man doing push-ups, who had switched to sit-ups.

The complete normality that has accompanied the solarium's opening should go far to dispel this country's traditionally staid image.

Nudism's Spanish practitioners call it "naturism," a word suggesting that nakedness is not sexy but simply the most natural way to go. And much of Madrid seems to have accepted the attitude that it is really no big deal.

From the left to the right in politics and the press, the solarium has been noted sometimes with amusement but always with the tolerance that has become a hallmark of the pluralism that has flourished in Spain since the end of the Franco years.

Once the foreign television crews had their peek at the first 20 or so naked sunbathers in early August, numbers grew steadily to the 100 to 150 sunbathers who regularly blanket the lawn.

The crowds were no surprise. Letter requests had been arriving for two years, asking the city to build a place for those whose means do not allow for frequent trips or a long vacation at the remote nude beaches, 250 miles away.

Madrid's nudists got almost all they asked for. Like the 5,000 members of the Spanish Naturism Federation, they can now pursue the complete tan near home.

But unlike the federation's members, most of whom live much nearer to the Mediterranean, they must go without one of the basic ingredients of a sunbather's day—a swim.

Relief may be in sight, though, as the city considers the delicate matter of whether to allow nakedness outside the enclosed solarium. Already its success has led to plans to open solariums at more of the city's 30 sports complexes.